

House Bill 576
March 17, 2011
Presented by Ken McDonald
House Fish, Wildlife and Parks Committee

Mr. Chairman and committee members, I am Ken McDonald, Wildlife Bureau Chief of Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP). I am here in opposition to House Bill 576.

HB576 defines mountain lions as a predatory animal and removes all protections for management of mountain lions, which currently are classified as a game animal under Title 87.

Mountain lions have been managed as a valued game animal since 1971 in recognition of their ecological importance. Mountain lion licenses sold annually have increased from 434 in 1971 to nearly 7,000 in recent years.

FWP's concerns with changing the status of mountain lions and removing all management controls include:

- It results in complete lack of management control to manage mountain lion populations.
- It greatly increases the likelihood that all ability to manage populations will be lost, likely through a ballot initiative. This has happened in other western states, and as we saw this past year with the anti-trapping initiative (I-160) that narrowly missed the ballot, it very well could happen with mountain lions.

FWP manages mountain lion populations at sustainable levels in consideration of prey populations, livestock conflicts, human safety concerns, and population status of the mountain lions in each hunting district. They are a high profile species that are of interest to multiple interests including hunters, livestock producers, wildlife advocates, and a strong anti-hunting contingent.

Mountain lions are being responsibly managed in consideration of multiple interests, making this bill unnecessary. The only good this bill would do is to inflame the anti-hunting contingents and likely jeopardize all management of mountain lions. For these reasons, we ask that you Do Not Pass HB576.